

STARTER RULES TURN SEQUENCE

Reset the twilight pool

Perform any "at the start of each of your turns" actions

1. Fellowship Phase

Perform fellowship actions

Move to the next site

2. Shadow Phase(s) – one for each Shadow player

Perform shadow actions

3. Maneuver Phase

Perform maneuver actions

4. Archery Phase

Perform archery actions

5. Assignment Phase

Assign defenders

6. Skirmish Phase(s) – one for each skirmish

Perform skirmish actions

Resolve that skirmish

7. Regroup Phase

Perform regroup actions

Reconcile Shadow players' hands

Either the Free Peoples player moves to the next site

(return to Shadow phase) – or the Free Peoples player reconciles and Shadow players discard all minions in play



THE LORD OF THE RINGS

TRADING CARD GAME

THE HUNTERS™

STARTER RULEBOOK

STARTER RULEBOOK TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	1
Starter Rulebook.	2
Comprehensive Rulebook.	2
Introduction	3
Important Concepts	4
Kinds of Cards	4
Culture	8
Vitality	9
Resistance	12
Twilight Pool	12
Phase Actions	13
Events.	14
Special Abilities	14
When, Each Time, and While	15
Setting Up the Game	16
Playing the Game	18
Fellowship Phase.	18
Table Layout	20-21
Shadow Phase(s)	24
Maneuver Phase	26
Action Procedure	26
Archery Phase	27
Assignment Phase	27
Skirmish Phase(s)	29
Fierce	31
Regroup Phase	32
Winning the Game	33
Other Important Rules	34
Contacting Decipher	40

THE LORD OF THE RINGS™ TRADING CARD GAME

THE HUNTERS™ STARTER RULEBOOK

If you have never played a trading card game...

The best way to learn is from a friend who already knows how to play. If your friends aren't players yet, we've designed this rulebook to get you started... then you can show them how to play!

This **Starter Rulebook** and its 60-card fixed pack are designed for new players just like you. It has examples of basic rules to help players new to TCGs learn how to play.

If you have played another trading card game...

Play a game or two with just the **Starter Rulebook** and the cards in your 60-card fixed pack, as if you were new to TCGs. Then download the **Comprehensive Rulebook** from our website at decipher.com and get some booster packs to find all the depth and strategy of the full game.

If you have played this game before...

This **Starter Rulebook** describes a simplified game for new players. Don't panic if you can't find a rule or two you're familiar with; you'll find them in the **Comprehensive Rulebook**. You should check out new rules dealing with sites, the adventure path, and regions (pages 7, 19, and 21); resistance and burdens (page 12); **hunter** (page 38); followers (page 38); reinforce (page 39).

This Starter Rulebook is in every The Hunters starter deck. The 60 cards in the fixed portion of your starter deck are designed to work with this rulebook, but the three rare cards in your starter deck might have game text that is not explained in here.

If this is your first experience with this trading card game, you should set those rare cards aside. Rare cards have an “R” in their collector’s info in the lower right corner.

The Starter Rulebook describes how to play a game between two or more players who each have a The Hunters starter deck. (Other *The Lord of the Rings* TCG starter decks might have game text that is not explained in this rulebook.)

INTRODUCTION

Most card games have just one deck of cards that never changes, but a trading card game (or TCG) works differently. In a TCG, you personalize your deck using cards from your collection.

The Lord of the Rings Trading Card Game provides two or more players with the same challenges that Frodo, bearer of the One Ring, faced on his fateful journey from Hobbiton to Mount Doom to destroy The One Ring.

Each player’s cards include his own fellowship — a group of companions, each represented by a different card. Other cards represent possessions, artifacts, events, and conditions that support and defend the fellowship.

On each player’s turn, a marker representing that player’s fellowship advances along the adventure path — a sequence of site cards, each representing an episode in the adventure. All players share the same adventure path, even though it is made up of cards from all the players in the game.

Each time a fellowship moves, minions played by one or more opponents may attack it; these minions may be supported by possessions, artifacts, events, and conditions of their own. The attacks will succeed or fail depending on the relative strengths of the companions and minions.

The minions of evil become more numerous as the fellowship moves farther into Middle-earth, resulting in greater risks to the fellowship and the Ring-bearer. In great need, the Ring-bearer can be saved by putting on the Ring — but this brings great peril of succumbing to the burden of the Ring, and losing the game. If your fellowship survives its adventures to reach the final site first, you are the winner!

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

KINDS OF CARDS

The Lord of the Rings TCG has three basic kinds of cards: site, Free Peoples, and Shadow. There is also The One Ring, which is different from all other cards.

Site cards

Each player has an adventure deck that consists of only nine site cards. These cards are used to chart the progress of the game.

The adventure deck is separate from the cards drawn and played during the game, which are placed in the draw deck.



Site cards have a dark compass in the upper left corner.

This symbol is not the same as the compass symbol used in previous blocks, in order to differentiate these sites from older sites.



Free Peoples cards

Free Peoples cards represent the forces of good. Each player has his own fellowship, made up of a Ring-bearer and other companions. When you take your turn, you play and use your Free Peoples cards.

Free Peoples cards have a light colored circular field in the upper left corner.



Shadow cards

Shadow cards represent the forces of evil and corruption. When another player takes his turn, you play and use your Shadow cards to hinder that player.

Shadow cards have a dark colored diamond-shaped field in the upper left corner.

The One Ring

This card represents the uniquely powerful item that is the focus of the story of *The Lord of the Rings*. In the middle of the card, The One Ring has its subtitle. It has no twilight cost, and its card type is “The One Ring.”

The One Ring is not a Free Peoples card and it is not a Shadow card.



CHARACTER (COMPANION, MINION)



All characters use the same basic card layout.

A **companion** is a Free Peoples character in your fellowship. (Companions have resistance where the site number is shown above.)

A **minion** is a Shadow character that attacks other players' fellowships.

FOLLOWER

A **follower** is a card that's not a character (you may find a follower in your starter deck rare cards). See page 38.

POSSESSION, EVENT, CONDITION, ARTIFACT



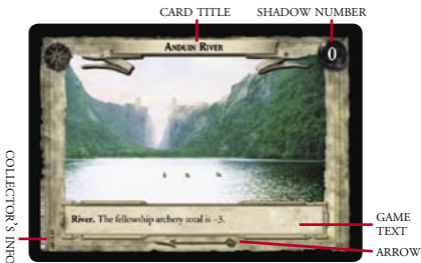
A **possession** is a weapon, suit of armor, or other kind of object used by a character.

An **event** is a card played from your hand representing an important occurrence, which you discard after you play it.

A **condition** is a card representing a significant change in the world, which stays in play until something discards it. Some conditions are played on characters or sites.

An **artifact** is a card representing a special, powerful object (you may find an artifact in your starter deck rare cards).

SITE



You bring a set of nine sites in your adventure deck. Each site must be different. Your adventure deck may include no more than three sites that have the same given Shadow number.

CULTURE

Most cards are part of a specific culture. A card's color, its background texture, and an icon in its upper right corner indicate its culture.

You'll find that cards from the same culture work well together. Sorting your cards by culture can make building your own deck easier. However, your deck may contain cards from several different cultures if you like.

Site cards and The One Ring are not part of any culture.

Culture names and symbols

Free Peoples cards

	Dwarven
	Elven
	Gandalf
	Gollum
	Gondor
	Rohan
	Shire

Shadow cards

	Sauron
	Men
	Orc
	Uruk-hai
	Wraith
	Isengard
	Moria

You don't have to memorize these names, since cultures are always referred to with icons in game text.

VITALITY

All characters in the game have vitality. This number represents a character's life force, stamina, sturdiness, and will to live.

Wounds

When a character is wounded by an enemy attack, his vitality is depleted. Place a wound **token** on the character to illustrate this. Glass beads (preferably blood red) make good tokens for this purpose. Wounds are always placed on a character one at a time. When you "wound a character," you place only one wound.

If a card tells you to "Wound 2 companions," you must choose two different companions to wound one time each (you cannot wound one companion twice).

Each wound a character has reduces its vitality by 1. When a character's vitality is reduced to zero, that character is immediately killed. (Reducing a character's strength to zero does not kill that character.)

Healing

A wounded character is a character who has at least one wound token. When a wound is removed from a character, this represents resting or healing. If game text says you should heal a character, the default meaning for that phrase is to remove one wound.

If a card tells you to “Heal 2 companions,” you must choose two different companions to heal one time each (you cannot heal one companion twice).

Generally, your fellowship only heals (removes wounds) at a **sanctuary** you reach on the adventure path. At the start of your turn when your fellowship is at a sanctuary (that is, a site 3 or site 6), you may heal up to 5 wounds from your companions.

When the rules say “you may heal up to 5 wounds from your companions,” you may choose to heal 5 different companions once, or one companion twice and another three times, or any other combination. You don’t have to heal any wounds at all since it says “up to 5,” which means you may choose any number from zero to 5.

Killed

When a character’s vitality is reduced to zero, that character is immediately killed. Place killed companions in your dead pile. The **dead pile** is separate from and next to your discard. Place all killed minions in your discard pile.

When you have a unique companion in your dead pile, you cannot play another copy of that card, or any other card with the same title. (You may play another copy of a non-unique card that is in your dead pile.)

A unique card has a dot (•) in its card title.

When you discard a companion to use its game text or as a result of some other effect, place that card in your discard pile (not your dead pile).

Exert

Sometimes you may **exert** a character by placing a wound on that card to show that the character takes an action that depletes his vitality.

Exerting a character is different from wounding a character, even though both require placement of a wound token.

Cards that prevent wounds cannot prevent a wound token placed by exerting.

Once a wound token is placed, whether from exerting or wounding, it can be healed by any effect that heals a wound.

No player may exert a character who is **exhausted** (who has only 1 vitality remaining). Such a character cannot be chosen as a character who must exert. To exhaust a character means to exert that character as many times as you can.

If a card tells you to exhaust a character with a vitality of 4 who has 1 wound, then you must exert that character 2 times by placing 2 wound tokens. A character with a vitality of 2 is exhausted with a single wound. A character with a vitality of 1 is always exhausted.

RESISTANCE



Companion cards have resistance, representing a companion's ability to withstand the lure of The One Ring. Frodo has a ring around his resistance icon, meaning he begins the game as your Ring-bearer.

Burdens

When your Ring-bearer loses will against the power of The One Ring, you place a **burden** token on him. Glass beads (preferably black) make good burden tokens, but anything you won't confuse with a wound will do.

There are many cards that add or remove burdens. Burdens are only placed on your Ring-bearer. Each burden reduces the resistance of *every* companion in your fellowship by 1.

If your Ring-bearer's resistance is reduced to zero, he is **corrupted**, and you lose the game. Only your Ring-bearer can be corrupted. If the resistance of any of your other companions is reduced to zero, there is no immediate penalty, though your opponent may play Shadow cards to take advantage of this.

TWILIGHT POOL

The twilight pool is an area on the table where twilight tokens are placed. The tokens in the twilight pool represent how dangerous the world is for the fellowship. Glass beads (preferably black) make good twilight tokens, but any convenient tokens will do. Keep a large reserve of twilight tokens handy.

Twilight Cost

In the upper left corner of each Free Peoples and Shadow card is that card's twilight cost. This is the number of twilight tokens that must be added to or removed from the twilight pool to play that card.

When you play a Free Peoples card, you must **add** a number of twilight tokens (from the reserve) to the twilight pool equal to that card's twilight cost.

When your opponent plays a Shadow card, he must **remove** a number of twilight tokens from the twilight pool equal to that card's twilight cost. A Shadow card cannot be played if its twilight cost cannot be met by the tokens available in the twilight pool.

In game text, you will find phrases like “Add ●” which means, “Add 1 twilight token to the twilight pool.”

You must meet any requirements to play a card (or perform an action) before paying its costs.

If a Free Peoples event requires you to spot twilight tokens, they must be there before you add tokens to pay for that card's cost.

PHASE ACTIONS

Before you learn more about the phases of a turn, you need to know how certain game actions link to those phases.

During each phase of a turn, one or more players are allowed to perform phase actions that use a word matching the name of that phase. These words are printed in boldface and followed by a colon.

Each phase action lasts for the duration of the phase named in the boldface word (unless otherwise specified).

Each phase action must be completely performed before another phase action can be performed. Phase actions cannot be combined.

*If one card says, “**Fellowship:** Play an Elf from your draw deck” and another card says, “**Fellowship:** Play an Elf to draw a card,” you cannot play one Elf from your draw deck to draw a card. You must choose one phase action or the other.*

An action labeled with the word “**Response:**” is not a phase action. Responses are explained later in this rulebook.

EVENTS

Every event card has a phase action that defines when you may play that card from your hand. The game text on that event may be performed only once for each copy of that event played. You cannot play an event during a phase that does not match its phase action.

Discard an event after you play it, and before the next action is taken. Even after being discarded, an event often has an ongoing or delayed effect until the end of the phase, or until a specified phase or condition is met.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Besides events, other types of cards may have a phase action as a part of their game text called a **special ability**, which may be used only while the card is in play. (The boldfaced word defines when you may do so.)

Each special ability is optional; you don't have to use it if you don't want to. You may use each special ability as many times as you like (even repeatedly during the same phase), as long as you meet the requirements for it and pay its costs. You cannot combine special abilities.

WHEN, EACH TIME, AND WHILE

A few special words or phrases you'll see in game text govern the timing of an action, just like the names of phases that are in phase actions. These include *when*, *each time*, and *while*; each is described below with an example.

- **When** is used if an effect can happen only once. *When you play this possession, you may draw a card.* This game text activates only once, when this card is played.

- **Each time** is used if an effect can happen more than once. *Each time you play a possession or artifact on your companion, draw a card.* If you play one possession, this game text activates once; if you play a second possession, it activates again, and so on.
- **While** is used if an effect is continuous. For example, *While Merry bears a weapon, he is strength +2.* When you play a weapon on Merry, this game text is activated; if that weapon is discarded, then this game text “turns off.”

Each of these effects has a *trigger* describing what makes it happen. The trigger is always described first, and followed by a comma.

SETTING UP THE GAME

Players need a supply of wound tokens (preferably red) and twilight tokens (preferably black). Each player will also need a player marker (a differently-colored token) that shows where his fellowship is on the adventure path.

Adventure Deck

Take all 9 of your site cards and place them face down in a pile on the table. This is your adventure deck.

No other player may look through your adventure deck during the game.

You don't have to keep your adventure deck in any order. Just look through it to get a card when you need to.

Who goes first?

Determine randomly who goes first. The first player chooses any site from his adventure deck and places it on the table to

begin the adventure path. This becomes site 1. Each player places his player marker onto that site card.

Place the adventure path off to the side, opposite from the twilight pool (see table layout on pages 20-21). That leaves room in the middle of the table for minions.

Starting Fellowship

Take one copy of each of the cards indicated below (depending on which starter product you have). Place them face up on the table, with Frodo bearing The One Ring (place it under Frodo with its title showing).

All Decks: Frodo, The One Ring

Hunters Deck: Gimli, Legolas

Mauhúr Deck: Eowyn, Gamling

Don't place any tokens into the twilight pool for the cards in your starting fellowship.

Draw Deck

The rest of your cards form your draw deck. Shuffle your draw deck, give the opponent on your right the opportunity to cut it, and draw eight cards to form your starting hand.

Note: If at any time you have no cards in your draw deck, you may reshuffle your discard pile to make a new draw deck. You may only do this once per game. **When you play using the rules from the Comprehensive Rulebook, you won't be able to reshuffle your draw deck.**

Game Setup Summary

- Each player places his adventure deck on the table.
- Determine randomly who goes first.
- First player plays a site from his adventure deck.

- Each player puts his player marker on that site.
- Each player places his starting fellowship on the table.
- Each player shuffles his draw deck and draws 8 cards

PLAYING THE GAME

Each player, going clockwise around the table, takes a turn according to the following **turn sequence**.

Turn Sequence

1. Fellowship Phase
2. Shadow Phase
3. Maneuver Phase
4. Archery Phase
5. Assignment Phase
6. Skirmish Phase(s)
7. Regroup Phase

When one player finishes his turn, the next player in clockwise rotation (to his left) takes a turn and so on.

Although the turn order rotates to the left (clockwise), note that many other procedures in the game actually rotate to the right (counter-clockwise).

START OF TURN

When your turn begins, **reset the twilight pool**. (Remove all tokens from the twilight pool. The pool begins the game empty, so this is not necessary on the first turn of the game.)

Then you complete any **start of turn** actions. Each of these actions may be performed only once per turn.

I. FELLOWSHIP PHASE

During your fellowship phase, you may perform fellowship actions, including playing most Free Peoples cards. Finally, move your fellowship forward along the adventure path.

Perform fellowship actions

If you are the Free Peoples player, you may perform fellowship actions during this phase, in any order.

Two fellowship actions are always available:

- Play a Free Peoples companion, possession, artifact, or condition from your hand to the table.
- “Discard to heal.” Spot a unique companion or unique ally with at least one wound and discard a card from your hand with the same card title (it may have a different subtitle) to heal that character.

A unique card has a dot (•) in its card title.

You may find other fellowship actions on events in your hand, or as special abilities on cards you already have in play.

Paying costs

To play a Free Peoples card, add a number of twilight tokens to the twilight pool equal to the card’s twilight cost.

Playing companions

Play companion cards in a row, near the other members of your fellowship already in play.

You cannot play a card from your hand to replace another card in play, even if those cards have the same card title or represent the same personality.

Playing possessions

Play Free Peoples possessions under a character, with the left edge of the card visible for its card title and **attribute bonuses** (modifiers for the character’s strength and/or vitality, written with a plus sign like “+2”). Some possessions play to your support area (a row of cards behind your fellowship, see table layout on pages 20-21).

Class

Each character may bear one possession or artifact of each class at one time. For example, a character may bear only one hand weapon, only one ranged weapon, only one armor, only one cloak, and only one staff.

Some possessions do not have a class. There is no limit to the number of possessions without a class that a character may bear.

Playing conditions

Play Free Peoples conditions either under a character (like a possession, if the card says, “Bearer must be...”) or to your **support area**, as indicated in by condition card.

Moving your fellowship



During each of your fellowship phases, when you are finished performing fellowship actions, your fellowship must move forward to the next site on the adventure path.

All players use the same adventure path for their player markers. The cards that make up that path are taken from the adventure decks of the players.

Place your player marker on the next site on the adventure path. If there is no site there yet (as is the case for the first player in the first turn), then a new site must be played from one of the Shadow players’ adventure decks, as described below under “playing sites.”

When you move your player marker to the next site, first perform any actions triggered by leaving the old site. Then perform actions that say, “When the fellowship moves...” Then, perform actions that occur when moving to the new site. Finally, add tokens to the twilight pool, as described below under “adding twilight tokens for movement.”

Playing sites

If your fellowship moves to a site that has not been played yet, one of the Shadow players must place a new site on the adventure path. To determine which player, look at the site you are moving from. Each site has an arrow at the bottom center of the card. This indicates who is to play the new site, with  meaning the Shadow player to your right and  meaning the Shadow player to your left. (In a two-player game, there is only one Shadow player at a time, so that player always plays the new site.)

That player looks through his adventure deck and chooses any site to play as the next site. It takes on the next consecutive number on the site path as its **site number**. It also takes on a **region number**: sites 1-3 are in region 1, sites 4-6 are in region 2, and sites 7-9 are in region 3.

The first time the first player moves during the game, a Shadow player looks through his adventure deck and chooses the next site to place on the adventure path. It becomes site 2. The next time a site is added after that, it will be site 3. Both of those sites are in region 1.

You may play a copy of a site on the adventure path even if an opponent's copy is already there. The copies are treated as different sites, with each given a different site number.

Adding twilight tokens for movement

Each time your fellowship moves to a new site, you must add twilight tokens to the twilight pool for each of the following:

- Add the number of twilight tokens indicated by the Shadow number of the site you're moving to.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS

TRADING CARD GAME



**ADVENTURE
PATH**



OPPON



YOUR FEL



**SUPPORT
AREA**

ENT'S MINIONS



LOWSHIP



**TWILIGHT
POOL**



**ADVENTURE
DECK**



**DRAW
DECK**



**DISCARD
PILE**

**DEAD
PILE**



- Add 3 twilight tokens if you are in region 2, or 6 twilight tokens if you are in region 3. (You may find it easier to remember this: add 3 if you've passed the sanctuary at site 3, or add 6 if you've passed the sanctuary at site 6).
- Add 1 twilight token for each companion in your fellowship.

You move a fellowship of four companions to a site 5 that has a Shadow number of 2. You add 2 twilight tokens for the Shadow number, 3 tokens for the region (region 2), and 4 tokens for your companions, for a total of 9 twilight tokens added to the twilight pool.

Movement Summary

- A Shadow player places the next site card, if needed.
- Perform “When you move from...” actions.
- Perform “When the fellowship moves...” actions.
- Move your player marker to the next site.
- Perform “When you move to...” actions.
- Add twilight tokens equal to the new site’s Shadow number.
- Add 3 twilight tokens if the new site is in region 2; or 6 if it is in region 3.
- Add 1 twilight token for each companion.

2. SHADOW PHASE(S)

Each other player in the game, starting with the player immediately to your right, has one Shadow phase.

During each player’s Shadow phase, that player may perform Shadow actions, including playing most Shadow cards. Each Shadow player may perform Shadow actions in any order desired during his or her Shadow phase.

Perform Shadow actions

There is one Shadow action that is always available:

- Play a Shadow minion, possession, artifact, or condition from your hand to the table.

Each Shadow player may perform any Shadow actions during his Shadow phase. When he has completed all of the Shadow actions he wishes to perform, the next Shadow player to his right (if any) then performs a Shadow phase.

Playing Shadow cards

A minion is played to the center of the table, across from the active fellowship. Artifacts, possessions, and conditions state in their game text where they play. The Shadow player must remove twilight tokens from the twilight pool as required when playing Shadow cards.

A Shadow player cannot play a Shadow condition, possession, or artifact on another Shadow player's minion, or to another player's support area. However, Shadow cards may give bonuses or other game effects to other players' Shadow cards, and Shadow players may play events for other players' Shadow cards as appropriate.

A Shadow player's minion may receive a strength bonus from another Shadow player's condition.

Each minion is normally played to a certain range of sites beginning with the minion's site number. Thus, if the minion is played to (or currently at) a site that has a lower site number, that minion is **roaming**. The player must pay a roaming penalty by removing an additional two twilight tokens when playing that minion.

A minion with a site number of 4 must remove 2 more twilight tokens to play at site 3. If that same minion plays to site 4, there

is no roaming penalty. If he survives the fellowship's first move to 3, he would no longer be roaming when the fellowship moves to site 4.

When the first Shadow player completes his Shadow phase, the next Shadow player does so. All Shadow players pay for cards by using the same twilight pool. The second Shadow player uses twilight tokens left over from the first Shadow player, and so on.

When all Shadow players have each completed a Shadow phase, it is time for the maneuver phase. (If there are no minions in play at the end of the final Shadow phase, then skip directly to the regroup phase.)

3. MANEUVER PHASE

Perform maneuver actions

Players may perform maneuver actions (special abilities on cards in play with “**Maneuver:**” and events with that keyword) using the **action procedure**.

ACTION PROCEDURE

As the Free Peoples player, you get the first opportunity to perform an action, and then the player on your right gets an opportunity, and so on counter-clockwise around the table.

If a player does not wish to perform an action, he may simply pass. Passing does not prevent a player from performing an action later in the same phase.

When all players consecutively pass, proceed to the archery phase.

4. ARCHERY PHASE

Players may perform archery actions (special abilities on cards in play with “**Archery:**” and events with that keyword) using the action procedure.

When all players consecutively pass, proceed to archery fire.

Archery fire

All Shadow players count the number of all their minions with the keyword **archer** to determine the “minion archery total.” No matter how many Shadow players there are, there is only one minion archery total.

As the Free Peoples player, you also count the number of your Free Peoples archer companions to determine the “fellowship archery total.”

There is always a “default” archery total of zero for each side. A card may add to your archery total even though you have no archers in play at that time.

The Free Peoples player assigns wounds to his or her companions, one at a time, equal to the minion archery total. The Shadow player then assigns wounds to his or her minions, one at a time, equal to the fellowship archery total. When all archery wounds have been placed, proceed to the assignment phase.

5. ASSIGNMENT PHASE

During your assignment phase, you may assign companions to defend against attacking minions. When the assignment phase is complete, each companion being attacked will lead to a separate skirmish phase.

Assign defenders

You may now assign companions to defend against attacking minions in any order (without needing events or special abilities). A player cannot assign more than one companion to the same minion.

Frodo and Aragorn face a single Uruk-hai. The Free Peoples player assigns Aragorn to the Uruk-hai, protecting Frodo from harm. He cannot assign both companions to the Uruk-hai.

When the Free Peoples player assigns one of his characters to skirmish a minion with the keyword **ambush** ●, the Shadow player who owns that minion may add ●.

*If your Man with **ambush** ● is assigned by the Free Peoples player, you may add two tokens to the twilight pool.*

All assignments of characters are on a one-to-one basis, with the following two exceptions:

- If your assigned companion has the keyword **defender +1**, you may assign that character at this time to one additional unassigned minion. Defender +2 allows that companion to defend against two additional unassigned minions, and so on. A character with defender +2 (or greater) satisfies any requirement for defender +1.

*Frodo and Aragorn face two Uruk-hai. The Free Peoples player could assign Aragorn to one and Frodo to the other. However, Aragorn has **defender +1**, so he may be assigned to defend against both minions, leaving Frodo again unharmed.*

- When you have informed the Shadow players that you are done making assignments, they may assign any unassigned minions to any companions (even if those companions are already assigned). The first Shadow player on your

right may assign any of his unassigned minions, and so on, counter-clockwise around the table.

*Frodo and Aragorn face four Uruk-hai. The Free Peoples player uses Aragorn's **defender +1** and assigns him to defend against two minions. He assigns Frodo to another. This leaves one unassigned Uruk-hai, so the Shadow player assigns the last minion to Frodo, trying to kill the Ring-bearer.*

Assignment Phase Summary

- Free Peoples player may assign defending companions to minions.
- Shadow players may assign leftover unassigned minions to any defending companions.

6. SKIRMISH PHASE(S)

When the assignment phase is complete, each defending companion will fight in a separate skirmish phase. In an order decided by the Free Peoples player, skirmishes are resolved one at a time by conducting a skirmish phase for each.

During each skirmish phase, players may perform skirmish actions, and then that skirmish must be resolved. All skirmish actions must be complete before proceeding to resolve the skirmish.

Once a skirmish phase has finished, the Free Peoples player must select another defending companion, and perform another skirmish phase.

Perform skirmish actions

Players may perform skirmish actions (special abilities on cards in play with “**Skirmish:**” and events with that keyword) using the action procedure described in the maneuver phase.

Each skirmish action lasts only for a single skirmish. When all players consecutively pass, proceed to resolve that skirmish.

Resolve that skirmish

If the total strength of one side is more than the strength of the other side, the side with the most strength wins that skirmish. (If there is a tie, the Shadow side wins.) Place one wound on each character on the losing side.

If Aragorn, with strength of 8, faces two Orcs, each with strength of 3 (total strength of 6), then Aragorn wins that skirmish and each losing Orc takes one wound.

When the winning side has one or more characters with the keyword **damage +1**, then each losing character takes one additional wound for each damage +1. (Damage +2 adds two wounds, and so on.) This is called a **damage bonus**, which may be added to or removed by various effects.

To continue the above example, if Aragorn has damage +1, then each Orc takes two wounds.

But if both Orcs have damage +1 and strength of 4 (thus winning the skirmish with combined strength of 8), then Aragorn takes three wounds instead.

If the total strength of one side is at least double the total strength of the other side, all the characters on the losing side are killed (regardless of how many wounds or how much vitality each has). This is also called being **overwhelmed**. When a character is overwhelmed, that character does not take any more wounds - he simply dies.

When the Ring-bearer is overwhelmed, he or she is killed, regardless of whether he or she wears the Ring. The One Ring's ability to convert wounds into burdens does not protect him from being overwhelmed, since no wounds are placed.

A skirmish phase ends after all actions triggered by winning or losing that skirmish have resolved.

A surviving minion or companion may skirmish again this turn if the fellowship makes another move (or if the minion has the keyword **fierce**).

Skirmish Phase Summary

- Free Peoples player chooses a skirmish.
- Players perform skirmish actions.
- Resolve that skirmish and assign wounds.
- If any skirmishes are unresolved, repeat this procedure.

FIERCE

After all the normal skirmishes are resolved, surviving minions with the keyword **fierce** must be defended against a second time.

Players perform another assignment phase and then complete a separate skirmish phase for each fierce skirmish.

Assignment Phase (Fierce)

The Free Peoples player assigns defenders using the same procedure as before, and then Shadow players assign any fierce minions that remain unassigned.

Skirmish Phase(s) (Fierce)

When the assignment phase for fierce minions is complete, each defending companion will fight in a separate skirmish phase. The procedure for each of these skirmish phases is the same as for a normal skirmish phase.

Aragorn is assigned to defend against a fierce Uruk-hai. In the normal skirmish phase, Aragorn wins and the Uruk-hai takes one wound. During the following fierce skirmish phase, the Free

Peoples player may once more assign a companion to defend against the Uruk-hai. This companion may be Aragorn or may be a different companion.

Only when all skirmishes (both normal and fierce) have been resolved do the players move on to the regroup phase.

7. REGROUP PHASE

During the regroup phase, players may perform regroup actions (special abilities on cards in play with “**Regroup:**” and events with that keyword) and then each Shadow player reconciles his hand. Then, the Free Peoples player decides whether to end his turn now or move again this turn.

Perform regroup actions

Players may perform regroup actions using the action procedure described in the maneuver phase. When all players consecutively pass, proceed to reconcile the Shadow players' hands.

Shadow players reconcile

Each Shadow player must **reconcile** his hand to eight cards, as follows:

- He may first discard one card from his hand.
- If he then has less than eight cards in his hand, he must draw cards until he has eight.
- Otherwise (when he has more than eight cards in his hand), he must discard from his hand until he has only eight.

Free Peoples player chooses

At the end of the regroup phase, if you are the Free Peoples player, you must select one of the following two choices:

- Move the fellowship to the next site (allowing the proper Shadow player to place a new site if needed), add tokens to the twilight pool (for the Shadow number of the new site, the region of that site, and the number of companions in the fellowship), and return to the Shadow phase(s).
- Or, reconcile your hand (just as the Shadow players did above). Then the Shadow players discard all minions in play (and cards borne by them), and your turn ends.

Move limit

During each of your turns, your fellowship must move at least once, but may move a number of times up to your move limit.

In a two- or three-player game, your move limit is two. In a game with four or more players, your move limit is equal to the number of your opponents when the game begins.

During your regroup phase, you may decide to make another move, subject to the limit above.

WINNING THE GAME

A player wins the game when his fellowship is at site 9 and his Ring-bearer survives all skirmish phases. The game ends, and there is no regroup phase on the last turn.

Alternately, a player may win the game when he becomes the last player left in the game (see below).

Losing the Game

A player loses the game if his Ring-bearer is killed. A player also loses the game if his Ring-bearer becomes corrupted by having burdens reduce his resistance to zero. There are also cards that can corrupt the Ring-bearer, regardless of how many burdens he might have.

If a player loses a game and there are at least two other players remaining, remove his player marker and all of his cards from play (and discard any opponent's cards that were on them).

Remove his sites on the adventure path in numerical order, and replace each with an opponent's corresponding site, in counter-clockwise order starting with the player on his right. The other players complete the losing player's turn.

OTHER IMPORTANT RULES

ACTIVE CARDS

During your turn, only these cards are active:

- sites on the adventure path,
- your Free Peoples cards,
- your copy of The One Ring, and
- your opponents' Shadow cards.

All other cards are inactive. Inactive cards are not affected by the game and do not affect the game.

Your companions and your opponent's minions are active. Your opponents' companions are not.

Exception: Any cards borne by inactive cards are inactive.

An opponent's Shadow condition on another opponent's companion is not active because that companion is not.

You cannot play another copy of a unique card that is already in play and currently active.

Sites are always active. A site's game text cannot be used unless the fellowship is there, although some cards may copy and use that game text.

If the game text of a site has a Shadow special ability, you may use that special ability only when the active fellowship is at that site and you are a Shadow player.

Exception: Site text is not active when the starting fellowships are played.

UNIQUENESS

Unique cards

Many character, possession, and artifact cards represent a thing that there is only one of. Such a card has a dot (•) before the card title, to tell you that only one of that card may be active and in play at a time.

You may have only one card with the card title of •Gandalf in play at one time. Other players may also have a card with the title of •Gandalf in play, but only one is allowed per player.

Two cards represent the same thing if they have the same card title (even if their subtitles or collector's info are different) or they have the same collector's info (even if their titles and subtitles are different).

For Shadow cards, if a copy of a unique card is already in play and active, you cannot play another card that has the same title (regardless of subtitles).

You cannot play a card from your hand to replace another card in play, even if those cards have the same card title or represent the same personality.

Non-unique cards

All cards that do not have a dot (•) before their card title are **non-unique**. This means that all players may have many copies of those cards in play at one time.

RESPONSES

A special ability or event labeled with the word “**Response:**” indicates that you may perform that action whenever the trigger described in its game text happens.

A response action is not a phase action (because there is no “response phase”).

THE ONE RING

Frodo begins the game as your Ring-bearer. He bears The One Ring for you, much as when he carried the Ring in his pocket or on a chain around his neck.

When can he put on the Ring?

The Ruling Ring, the version of The One Ring in your starter deck, has a “**Response:**” special ability. It can be used during any skirmish phase, even one that doesn’t involve your Ring-bearer. Before you place a wound token on your Ring-bearer, you may tell your opponent that your Ring-bearer is putting on The Ruling Ring instead.

When you use the special ability on The One Ring, your Ring-bearer “wears” the Ring. Using this special ability on The One Ring is optional.

Remember, wounds are always placed on a character one at a time. Once activated, this special ability continues to be in effect as long as your Ring-bearer wears The Ruling Ring. Your Ring-bearer cannot put on the Ring to save himself from being overwhelmed. When he is overwhelmed, no wounds are taken and he is killed.

What happens while the Ring-bearer wears the Ring?

While your Ring-bearer wears The Ruling Ring, each time he is about to take a wound, a burden is added instead.

While wearing the Ring, your Ring-bearer can perform all normal actions such as moving and skirmishing. He may defend against attacking minions as usual.

There are special Shadow cards with powerful effects that can only be played while your Ring-bearer wears the Ring.

How does the Ring-bearer take the Ring off?



At the start of the regroup phase, your Ring-bearer takes off the Ring and simply carries it again.

KEYWORDS

Each card has one or more keywords that identify it. Most keywords are *unloaded* keywords, with no special rules (although they may be referenced by other cards). Keywords with rules are called *loaded* keywords. Find the explanation for each loaded keyword with the index.

Unloaded keywords

Race (such as Man, Elf, Ent, Orc, Uruk-hai, or Wizard) is an unloaded keyword.

The race of “Man” includes women of the appropriate culture. A possession that requires a  Man bearer may be borne by a  female character who has the race of “Man.”

Note that in *The Lord of the Rings* TCG, Uruk-hai is a different race from Orc.

Sites have unloaded keywords like battleground, dwelling, forest, marsh, mountain, plains, river, and underground. Other unloaded keywords include knight, ranger, spell,

stealth, and tale. (These are the most common unloaded keywords, though you will find others on some cards.)

Ring-bound & unbound. Only companions can be unbound or Ring-bound (not minions). Any companion without the Ring-bound keyword is an unbound companion.

Loaded keywords

Card type (such as minion or event) and *class* (such as staff or hand weapon) are loaded keywords. Other loaded keywords include ambush, archer, damage +1, defender +1, fierce, lurker, muster, Ring-bearer, and toil. (Other loaded keywords are explained in the Comprehensive Rulebook.)

MISCELLANEOUS

Playing cards from your draw deck

Some cards allow you to play a card directly from your draw deck or discard pile. You must still pay any costs and meet requirements necessary for playing that card.

When you finish looking through your draw deck, reshuffle it and give the player to your right the opportunity to cut it.

Spot

The word *spot* sets up a requirement for playing a card or using a special ability in conjunction with a noun such as, “To play, spot an Elf.” This is equivalent to, “An Elf must be in play and active for you to play this card.”

Cards in your dead pile are active during your turn, but they're not in play. You can't spot a card in your dead pile.

Normally, you don't have to spot all the cards in play that meet the requirement if you don't want to.

If a card says, “for each Elf you spot” and there are 2 Elves in play (and active), you may choose to spot 2 Elves, 1 Elf, or none.

However, if a card says, “you can spot,” that means you don’t have a choice and you have to spot anything and everything that meets the requirement.

“While you can spot The Balrog, skip the archery phase” means you can’t make a choice (it either works or it doesn’t).

Replacing sites

Some cards allow a player to play the next site on the adventure path at times when the fellowship is not moving. These may be used even when the next site is already there. In such cases, the new site replaces the old one. The old one is returned to its owner’s adventure deck. The new site takes the same site number the old site had, so that there is always only one site 1 in play, one site 2, and so on.

Followers

Follower is a new card type. A follower represents help for your fellowship that joins for a short time and then departs. Followers are not members of your fellowship. They are not allies or companions. They are not characters, although they are often named and depicted with images of people from the story. Even though a follower may seem as if it were an Elf or Hobbit or Wizard, it can’t be spotted as such because a follower doesn’t have a race on its card type line. Followers can’t bear other cards, including possessions or conditions.

A follower is played to your support area. While your follower is in your support area, it has no effect on the game. Each follower has the keyword “Aid” (see below) which you can use to transfer that follower to one of your companions.

When your follower is borne by a companion, that follower will provide an ongoing effect or a special ability that may then be used. A companion may bear more than one follower. If that companion is killed, all of its followers are discarded, just like other cards borne by that companion. During the regroup phase, when the Free Peoples player reconciles and minions are discarded, each follower is transferred back to the support area (at no cost). Follower cards have a gold circle in the upper left to remind you to return them to the support area.

In later turns, that follower may again be transferred to a companion (the same one or a different one, your choice) using the above procedure.

Aid



This keyword has the form of “Aid – X,” where “X” is the cost to use the aid keyword. You use the aid keyword as a maneuver action. At the start of the maneuver phase, you may pay the aid cost to transfer that follower to your companion. Place it beneath the card, just like a possession or condition borne by that companion. The follower is borne by the companion for the rest of the turn, no matter how often your fellowship moves. You don’t have to pay the aid cost again for a follower borne by a companion in a subsequent maneuver phase.

Hunter

This keyword has the form of “Hunter X” where “X” is the strength bonus the character receives when skirmishing a character that does not have the hunter keyword.

Reinforce

This verb, used in game text, means to add a culture token to a card that already has a token of the same culture. You may choose any of your cards with the appropriate culture token if you have more than one. If an effect lets you reinforce more than one culture token, you may put them all on one card or divide them up however you choose.

Your card says, “When you play this possession, you may reinforce a  culture token.” When you play this card, you may choose any of your Dwarven cards that currently has one or more  culture tokens and add another token to that card.

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INDEX

action procedure	24	moving your fellowship	18
active cards	32	non-unique	33
adventure deck	3, 14	overwhelmed	28
aid	39	phase action	12
ambush	26	possession	6, 17, 23
archery phase	25	race	35
artifact	6	reconcile	30
assignment phase	25	region number	19
attribute bonuses	17	regroup phase	30
burden	11	reinforce	39
character	5	reset the twilight pool	16
class	18	resistance	10
companion	5, 17	response	34
comprehensive rulebook	1	roaming	23
condition	6, 18, 23	sanctuary	9
corrupted	11, 31	setting up the game	14
culture	7	Shadow cards	4
damage +1	28	Shadow number	7, 19
dead pile	9	Shadow phase	22
defender +1	26	site	3, 7, 19, 37
discard to heal	17	site number	19
draw deck	15	skirmish phase	27
event	6, 13	special ability	13
exert	10	spot	36
exhausted	10	start of turn actions	16
fellowship phase	16	starting fellowship	15
fierce	29	support area	18, 23
follower	38	The One Ring	4, 34
Free Peoples cards	4	tokens	8, 11
healing	9	turn sequence	16
hunter	9	twilight pool	11
keywords	35	uniqueness	33
killed	9	vitality	8
kinds of cards	3	when, each time, and while	13
losing the game	31	who goes first	14
maneuver phase	24	winning the game	31
minion	5, 23	wounds	8
move limit	31		